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At this moment I cannot state without doubt that the reception of two productions by Konrad Swinarski, *Smak miodu* [*A Taste of Honey*] by Shelagh Delaney in 1959 at the Wybrzeże Theatre in Gdańsk and *Wszystko dobre, co się dobrze kończy* [*All's Well That Ends Well*] by Shakespeare in 1971 in the Stary Theatre in Kraków, was absolutely exceptional in the post-war history of Polish culture. But it was definitely unusual. The two productions featured homosexual characters. Homosexual men. This is not what made the productions exceptional; rather, it is that the reviews openly discussed the homosexual orientation of the characters onstage. Both productions were created long before the birth of the gay movement in Poland in the 1980s. But they are separated by a crucial caesura: the sexual revolution in the West and the birth of the gay movement in the US in the late 1960s. From the late 1950s, Swinarski worked regularly as a director in the West, especially in West Germany, so he must have been aware of these changes. But he also must have realized that Polish audiences and critics were not directly aware of the revolutionary transformations taking place elsewhere (his first version of *All's Well That Ends Well* was created at the Schauspielhaus in Düsseldorf in 1969, in an entirely different context of social conventions).

In post-war Polish literature and film, there was no shortage of characters who might have been 'suspected' of homosexual desires, but usually this was not made explicit. There was an accepted, clearly understood cultural, visual and linguistic code that signalled more or less obviously the presence of homosexual motifs. Yet both artistic and interpretive practices made it possible to avoid writing about this. They used euphemism, circumlocution and allusion, or simply omitted the issue. Homosexuality, regarded as a socially marginal phenomenon, pathological and almost nonexistent, was not considered an essential issue for art and thus could not aspire to the status of a universally meaningful motif worthy of dignified artistic expression.

In the context of Polish literature, this phenomenon was probably grasped for the first time by German Ritz.[1] In the context of cinema,

1 German Ritz, *Nić w labiryncie pożądania: gender i płeć w literaturze polskiej od romantyzmu do postmodernizmu* [*A Thread in the Labyrinth of Desire: Gender and Sex in Polish Literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism*], trans. by Bronisław Drąg, Andrzej Kopacki and Małgorzata Łukasiewicz (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 2002).

Sebastian Jagielski elaborated his thesis:

> Homosexuality was excluded from public discourse, but at the same time it freely penetrated […] national culture. This hidden and neutralized otherness was incorporated into the sphere of what was publicly acceptable, familiar, normative and allowed. What the official discourse excluded from its field was hidden behind its façade, leaving traces of its (non)existence in texts.[2]

By emphasizing social hostility towards homosexuality, films, rather than literature, could reveal the social contexts that made homosexuality taboo. Jagielski refers to the meaningful example of a film produced in the late 1960s:

> Even though homosexuality was associated with social margins, deviation and perversion, it was not penalized in Poland, yet public opinion was fixed on this subject. A short and rather insignificant scene from the comedy *Człowiek z M-3* [*Man with an Apartment*] (1968, directed by Leon Jeannot) illustrates social attitudes towards non-heterosexuals: a disturbed pharmacist afraid that Tomasz (played by Bogumił Kobiela) was trying to seduce him says: 'But that should be a crime.' 'That', obviously, doesn't have a name. It is beyond language.[3]

Ultimately, Jagielski outlines a clear and powerful thesis:

> Manifesting desire between men is not a problem as long as it remains unnamed. Hidden behind queer codes, allusions and masks, homoeroticism has been present in Polish cinema since the late 1970s, and later, when the disclosed gay man displaced the hidden homosexual, desire between men disappears from the cinema, and even if it comes back from time to time, it does so only in the context of homosexual paranoia.[4]

Polish theatre of the 1960s and 1970s can also be described as containing homoeroticism hidden behind 'queer codes, allusions and masks'. In this context, the two productions by Swinarski become especially significant. What matters is not only that Swinarski displayed homosexuals onstage, but how he did so: he made reviewers break the code of silence, transgress the social and linguistic taboo. This bears emphasis, as the homosexuality of Swinarski himself, who died in 1975, was omitted and hidden in biographical narratives for a long time.

> Even though Swinarski's orientation was quite commonly known (and perhaps accepted) in the so-called circles, there was never any mention of it in published texts or statements. It was publicly stated for the first time probably in an essay by Magdalena Grochowska, 'Coraz wyżej i wyżej' ['Higher and Higher'] in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 16 August 2003.[5]

2 Sebastian Jagielski, *Maskarady męskości. Pragnienie homospołeczne w polskim kinie fabularnym* [*Masquerades of Masculinity: Homosocial Desire in Polish Narrative Film*] (Kraków: Universitas, 2013), p. 247.

3 Ibid., pp. 248–49.

4 Ibid., p. 347.

5 Beata Guczalska, 'Znane i nieznane listy Konrada Swinarskiego' ['Known and Unknown Letters of Konrad Swinarski']), *Didaskalia*, 2018, no. 147.

Both Geoff in *A Taste of Honey* and Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well* play a powerful part in developing the plot, provoke viewers to evaluate their actions, and trigger strong emotions. The performances by Władysław Kowalski in *A Taste of Honey* and Wojciech Pszoniak in *All's Well That Ends Well* were recognized as outstanding achievements, praised by reviewers, remembered by spectators, and both productions were great successes for Swinarski. Thus it was difficult to pass over these characters in silence when discussing the two productions. In *A Taste of Honey*, Geoff's sexual orientation was quite openly demonstrated, and the play itself was regarded as one of the most groundbreaking achievements in practices of depicting homosexuals in British theatre. In his book *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage,* Nicholas de Jongh wrote that *A Taste of Honey,* produced by Joan Littlewood (an outstanding leftist director spied on for many years by the secret service because of her association with the communist party), indicated a new trend in overcoming hostility towards homosexuals by eliciting the spectators' empathy for their fate, despite the censors' demand to remove the parts of the play that included the most explicit references to Geoff's sexual orientation.[6]

In Shakespeare's play, homosexual relationships are not explicitly mentioned, but here Swinarski made them clear in stage actions. No one in the audience could have any doubts regarding the feelings between Parolles and Bertram in the first act or the reason Lafew decided to take care of Parolles when he was abandoned by Bertram. Anna Polony confirmed the clarity of Swinarski's intentions when she recalled the production after many years: 'It was a revolutionary reading of the play. Swinarski didn't stage a comedy, but the drama of Helena, Parolles and Bertram. He established a relationship between Bertram and Parolles as a male couple.'[7] Swinarski was attacked because of this by one critic, Józef Maśliński, who regarded the Shakespearean Parolles as nothing more than an incarnation of the figure of the swaggering soldier, someone similar to Papkin from *Zemsta* [*Revenge*], by Aleksander Fredro, a purely comedic character. He wrote: 'The director burdened Wojciech Pszoniak with some complex about homosexual impairment (very anachronistic for both the epoch and the environment represented in the play!) which unnecessarily charged the outstanding virtuosity of this, as I said, Papkin.'[8] Maśliński found the homosexual relationships a redundant extra and 'made-up ambiguity'. There is little doubt that the phrase 'homosexual impairment' reflected the social attitude towards homosexuality at that time, but it seems surprising that a critic would repeat without any self-reflection the gesture of stigmatizing and humiliating Parolles, shown so acutely and strikingly by Swinarski—a gesture whose moral significance as a brutal and harmful act was undoubted in this production.

6 Nichol de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 87.

7 Anna Polony, Petarda' ('Firecracker'), interview by Dariusz Zaborek, *Gazeta Wyborcza – Wysokie Obcasy*, 22 December 2007.

8 Józef Maśliński, 'Mieszczańska dziewczyna wobec tych wspaniałych rycerzy' ['A Bourgeois Girl Faced by These Splendid Knights'], *Życie Literackie*, 1971, no. 46.

Even though the premieres of the two productions were twelve years apart, there are some striking similarities between the two characters, Geoff and Parolles, in terms of their fates and social background. Both characters seem defenceless and naive and show their feelings too openly. Both face disappointment, rejection, ridicule and humiliation. Geoff, who is taking care of the pregnant Jo, is dismissed by her mother. His fragility, vulnerability, and emotionality are ridiculed as unmanly and contemptible. Parolles is taken for a coward, sneered at and humiliated by a group of soldiers. Eventually, he is taken into the service of Lafew and forced to attend to his master's sexual needs. Both plays were regarded by reviewers as drastic, cruel and brutal in their portrayal of people and their relationships. Many phenomena and situations shown in these productions were regarded as pathological, deviant, typical for the underclass or the sphere of dangerous instincts. Consequently, in the eyes of reviewers, the homosexual characters blended into this grim social landscape and assumed its pathological features. It must be clearly noted that such interpretations were inconsistent with the intentions of the director and actors, who wanted to portray both characters as honest, sincere, a bit childish and hurt by their environment. The gap between the dominant social attitude towards homosexuality and the portrayal of Geoff and Parolles led to a characteristic contradiction in reception. On one hand, the reviewers noticed the true intentions, naiveté and sincerity of these characters, but on the other hand, still regarded their homosexuality as deviant and difficult or impossible to accept.

Swinarski enjoyed entangling his viewers in contradictions and encouraging reflection and critical analysis of social reality. He learned this from his masters such as Bertolt Brecht, with whom he spent several months during an internship at the Berliner Ensemble. Brecht's dialectical method emphasized the incompatibility between the subjective and objective meanings of a stage gesture; its social and psychological meanings are never compatible. Consider another review of *A Taste of Honey*. Describing the main characters of the production, Józef Szczawiński writes of Geoff: 'And finally this young homosexual, a boy as lost in the hostile world as Jo, feeling a great longing, the need for friendship, wanting to take care of someone (which is not unrelated to his condition).'[9] Even though calling homosexuality a condition is immensely stigmatizing and unacceptable nowadays, this passage includes a surprising charge of empathy toward the young homosexual, his feelings and desires. The following paragraph of the review confirms it:

> The Geoff character is also interesting. In this case, the author managed to avoid the serious danger of saying some sentimental sentences about a boy in love, who devotes all his care and feelings to a girl seduced by another man and abandoned by her family and friends. We can clearly sense that the womanly care facilitating his noble gestures is rooted in his nature and that it comes at least partly from Geoff's homosexuality. Władysław Kowalski brings to this character

9 Józef Szczawiński, 'Gorzki smak miodu' ['A Bitter Taste of Honey'], *Kierunki*, 1960, no. 5.

> a certain objective softness and cordiality, eliciting a lot of sympathies for the boy and expressing some kind of truth about the good embedded in people, even those who are lost and have difficulty coping with their lives. The warmth and softness attributed to these young characters also by the director have nothing to do with depicting them as whiners.[10]

Associating Geoff's care with his 'female nature' and homosexuality is stereotypical and confirms social beliefs about this issue, but an attempt to understand the personality of this character, to elicit his nobility and the subtlety of his psychological image, seems in itself something exceptional and entirely absent from the discourse on homosexuality of that time, which publicly criminalized and medicalized this phenomenon, and derided and vulgarized it in colloquial language. It seems, therefore, that Swinarski's production performed the same function of breaking social conventions as the famous production by Joan Littlewood created only a year before at her Theatre Workshop.

Geoff aroused the spectators' compassion, but this didn't save him from social alienation. It should be emphasized that Szczawiński was the only reviewer who used the neutral expression 'homosexual' and provided such an elaborate description of Geoff. In other reviews, Geoff is called a 'pederast' (*pederasta*), a 'young pederast', a 'boy-pederast', a 'fag' (*pedzio*) or a 'young fag'. 'Pederast' (with its more or less offensive variations) was commonly used to describe homosexuals, as Władysław Kowalski, who played Geoff, recalled years later when talking about his stage debut.[11] When creating this character, he was aware of the audience's potential attitude towards him. This notion was not neutral, not to mention affirmative. Dictionaries from that time confirm this. In a dictionary of foreign terms published in 1961, we read that pederasty is 'unnatural amorous relationships between men.'[12] Doroszewski's dictionary defines pederasty as 'sexual perversion consisting in men copulating with other men'.[13] Therefore, it seems surprising how easy it was for the reviewers to use this notion to describe a character who aroused common sympathy and even respect. Presumably, the linguistic practices of that time didn't give the reviewers much to work with. They could either use a stigmatizing term or remain silent (the fairly neutral notion of 'homosexuality' was perhaps too medical and didn't fit the stylistic register of a theatre review). Some reviewers chose concealment and subtle euphemisms, and tried to express Geoff's otherness by calling him a 'lyrical student' or 'platonic lover', or by writing of the character's charm, gentleness, emotionality and 'artistic soul'. At the same time, the general description of the play included epithets such as

10 Ibid.

11 Grzegorz Sroczyński, 'Władysław Kowalski ma syna geja. I jest z niego dumny' ['Władysław Kowalski Is Proud to Have a Gay Son'], *Gazeta Wyborcza – Duży Format*, 28 May 2013.

12 Zygmunt Rysiewicz, ed., *Słownik wyrazów obcych* [*Dictionary of Foreign Expressions*] (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961).

13 Witold Doroszewski, ed., *Słownik języka polskiego* [*Dictionary of the Polish Language*] (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1958–1969).

'deviations', 'perversion', 'distortions', 'deviants', 'abnormal characters', or 'derelicts'. It was clear for the readers of these reviews that Geoff was one of these characters. Those who openly called Geoff a pederast sometimes attempted to soften or temper the stigmatizing character of this word, either by using the cluster word 'boy-pederast' or by emphasizing the character's lyrical quality in his description. Stefan Treugutt, an outstanding theatre critic, found a different solution: he used a stylistic device to distance himself from social attitudes and wrote of Geoff: 'They say that he is a pederast.'[14] The stigmatizing effect of this word was thus shifted onto those who used it, yet he still clearly informed his readers of the character's otherness. Andrzej Jarecki, who reviewed the production twice (after the premiere in Gdańsk and guest performances of the Wybrzeże Theatre in Warsaw), several times, almost with pleasure, called Geoff a 'fag'.[15] Perhaps, in this case, this word was not intended as an escape from the stigmatizing dimension of the word, but rather an attempt to associate the character with a certain feature of familiarity, thereby including him in our ordinary daily life, even if patronizingly.

Swinarski's production and Kowalski's interpretation of Geoff couldn't make any significant change in linguistic practices stigmatizing homosexuals, but they did cause some turbulence, distortion and shift within this field. First, they managed to transgress the rule of taboo and euphemism in talking about homosexuality in the public sphere. Second, they revealed the powerful inconsistency between the stigmatizing notion and the character eliciting positive emotions in the audience. Third, they included a homosexual character in the network of lively and emotionally saturated social relations. I'm not sure whether any literary or cinematic work of that time could compete with Swinarski's production in this respect. At the same time, the reception of this production revealed a wide spectrum of social stereotypes forming the image of the homosexual. In her canonical text from the 1960s, Mary McIntosh called such social practice 'the homosexual role', meaning a set of social expectations enabling identification of homosexual people in the public space.[16] It was thus not so much about effective recognition of homosexual behaviour by the heterosexual majority, but rather a set of tools enabling the conditional inclusion or exclusion of homosexual people in social relations. In a similar manner, Swinarski encouraged viewers to negotiate the rules enabling the inclusion of homosexuals in social life and leading them out of the field of exclusion. However, he could not go beyond the horizon of the play, in which Geoff was at the same time accepted and ridiculed. In *A Taste of Honey*, we find an ideally grasped 'homosexual role' that had a chance of winning social acceptance at that time. He was a gentle, caring, feminized, sensitive and resourceful man.

14 Stefan Treugutt, 'Jeszcze raz "życie bez retuszu"' ['Once More, "Life without Retouching"'], *Przegląd Kulturalny*, 1960, no. 5.

15 Andrzej Jarecki, 'Smak miodu i smak octu' ['The Taste of Honey and the Taste of Vinegar'*], Nowa Kultura*, 1959, no. 49; and 'Smak miodu' ['A Taste of Honey'], *Sztandar Młodych*, 27 January 1960.

16 Mary McIntosh, 'The Homosexual Role', *Social Problems*, 16.2 (Autumn 1968).

It is perhaps not a coincidence that the 'role' depicted in this way closely corresponded to the function of the *berdache* (two-spirit) in traditional American Indian societies analysed by anthropologists. Ruth Benedict wrote about them in the 1930s in her *Patterns of Culture*, contrasting Native American societies with contemporary Western societies:

> Western civilization tends to regard even a mild homosexual as an abnormal. The clinical picture of homosexuality stresses the neuroses and psychoses to which it gives rise, and emphasizes almost equally the inadequate functioning of the invert and his behaviour. We have only to turn to other cultures, however, to realize that homosexuals have by no means been uniformly inadequate to the social situation. They have not always failed to function. […]
> In most of North America there exists the institution of the berdache, as the French called them. These men-women were men who at puberty or thereafter took the dress and the occupations of women. Sometimes they married other men and lived with them. Sometimes they were men with no inversion, persons of weak sexual endowment who chose this role to avoid the jeers of the women. The berdaches were never regarded as of first-rate supernatural power, as similar men-women were in Siberia, but rather as leaders in women's occupations, good healers in certain diseases, or, among certain tribes, as the genial organizers of social affairs. They were usually, in spite of the manner in which they were accepted, regarded with a certain embarrassment.[17]

In *A Taste of Honey* Geoff almost ideally fits this kind of role. There is an important difference, however: the berdaches were allowed to have a sex life with men, while Geoff seems to be desexualized, condemned to a platonic relationship with a woman, who accepts his care but at the same time ruthlessly ridicules him. It is worth mentioning here that it was anthropological and ethnographic research that significantly breached the practices of exclusion and repression described by Ruth Benedict (and, as Gayle S. Rubin persuasively argued, ethnographers and sociologists were the ones who laid the foundations for contemporary queer studies).[18] Thus Swinarski's production became an important testimony to the changes in Western patterns of culture in terms of the treatment of homosexuality and reception of these changes by Polish audiences.

Twelve years later, in the production *All's Well That Ends Well*, this image changed radically. Swinarski depicts the triangle of men who are undoubtedly engaged in sexual relationships. Bertram, a young count, is a lover of Parolles, a soldier who probably seduced him. His army comrades educate Bertram to be a 'man', provoking him to rape a woman. He renounces Parolles and marries Helena at the end of the play. Abandoned by Bertram, humiliated by a group of men, stripped of his clothes, Parolles enters the service of Lafew, a sadist and homosexual. Swinarski powerfully conveys the image of homosexual

17 Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Mentor Books, 1960), p. 227.

18 Gayle S. Rubin, 'Studying Sexual Subcultures: The Ethnography of Gay Communities in Urban North America', in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 310–46.

relationships in this homophobic, ruthless, violent society. He shows the impossibility of an honest life in harmony with one's own desires in this brutal reality.

Nobody writing about the production had any doubts about the nature of the relationships between these three men. Interestingly, when writing about them, this time the reviewers usually avoided explicitly naming these relationships. The word 'pederast' disappeared, clearly displaced by a more modern notion of 'homosexual', which might suggest that its presence in registers of Polish language changed over the decade, shifting towards a more colloquial use. The word 'fag' is used only once in reference to Bertram, suggesting his passive sexual position in his relationship with Parolles.[19] At the same time, it suggests his passive role in the battle between Helena and Parolles for his love. 'Bertram abandons Helena and runs away with his *maître d'amour* Parolles to war,' wrote Jan Kłossowicz,[20] encrypting the nature of the relationship between the two men and their sexual positions in the French expression *maître d'amour* (love master). The nature of this relationship is usually depicted by an adjective such as 'drastic', 'ambiguous' or 'repulsive'. One reviewer wrote that the director 'spiced up' Shakespeare's drama. Another called Lafew a man with 'unhealthy inclinations'. These expressions unambiguously position these relationships as something immoral, despicable or creating unhealthy sensation. Marta Fik wrote about them:

> Each line performed by them, each gesture, even an impulsive reflex, has its not so beautiful subtext. In Act I, Bertram (Aleksander Fabisiak) and Parolles (Wojciech Pszoniak) are bound by friendship going beyond normal sympathy between two peers (only participating in the rape of Violenta would awaken in Bertram a desire more compatible with the laws of nature). Lafew's (Wiktor Sadecki) harassment of Parolles has a clearly erotic foundation. …
> Parolles knows what Lafew expects of him; after the slapping scene, he learns the taste of his future existence. He agrees to it, and it is not just the lack of dignity enabling him to withstand the insults of the high and mighty of this world. Deprived of the glitter and his captaincy, Parolles can offer not only his servility but also his body.[21]

The reviewer exposes the explicit nature of the sexual relationship between these men. But she regards the love between Parolles and Bertram, and sadistic practices of Lafew and trading one's body, as equally 'not so beautiful'. Even if the phrase 'a desire more compatible with the laws of nature' can be interpreted as part of the world of norms depicted in the production and not as representing Fik's personal attitudes, it still doesn't change the fact that the density of circumlocution, understatement and euphemism creates a thick aura of concealment and derision, which accompanied homosexual relationships in Poland at that time.

Bertram is a coward and conformist who abandons his lover to seek social approval (and the way to achieve it is to rape a woman). Lafew

19 Jan Kłossowicz, 'Czarna komedia' ['Black comedy'], *Literatura*, 1971, no. 45–46.

20 Ibid.

21 Marta Fik, 'Teatr okrutny i spokojna publiczność' ['Cruel Theatre and Calm Audience'], *Teatr*, 1971, no. 22.

uses his social standing and wealth to satisfy his sadistic desires. In this triangle, only Parolles can arouse any positive reactions in the audience. His humiliation, invincible will to live, and self-awareness of his own position could powerfully resonate in Swinarski's production thanks to the outstanding performance of Wojciech Pszoniak. Marta Fik noted that Pszoniak's performance can be associated with Dostoevsky's characters because it introduces into the play a significant shift of emphasis and opens up a tragic perspective.

> It is the 'interrogation' of Parolles (IV. 3.) that clearly shows what this production is about. A little coward facing death, thinking that death is only one slash of a sword or a noose away, voraciously clinging to a hope that perhaps he will still manage to 'eat and drink, and sleep as soft', and the main accused of this scene, the ruthless torturers, authors of a masquerade which has nothing to do with the Shakespearian farce, even though the majority of viewers enjoy it very much. The masquerade is so shocking also thanks to the great performance of Wojciech Pszoniak.[22]

Swinarski changed the strategy entirely. He wasn't seeking the audience's sympathy for his character, as in *A Taste of Honey*. There is no 'homosexual role' to become a subject of negotiations and contract with the audience. Not just the language used by the reviewers changed, but the social paradigm of homosexuality itself, which in *All's Well That Ends Well* strikes at a homophobic society, and therefore also at the production's audience. Both homosexual desires and social violence against homosexual relationships are totally exposed. But the reviewers apparently failed to distinguish between the two, since both were taken to be drastic and repulsive. Furthermore, raping a woman seems more 'natural' than the love between men, which in itself becomes an all too striking indicator of homophobic attitudes. It is clear that critics could not deal with the interpretation of Swinarski's production and that the depicted events and situations, as well as their moral overtone, went beyond the horizon of available discourse. In his production, Swinarski powerfully revealed this. Fik remarked bitterly on viewers who laughed during the cruellest scene of the performance.

Jan Błoński attempted to control this predictable chaos of meanings in his text written for the programme, in which he imposed top-down the normative meaning of the production. He clearly describes the relationship between Bertram, Parolles and Lafew, but he resorts to such euphemisms as 'unspoken inclinations'; the reasons Bertram avoids women are described as 'particular' and Parolles as 'not just Bertram's companion and attendant'. Everything is left to the reader's perspicacity, and at the same time nothing is ambiguous. Homosexual desires are included in the image of reality but still remain unspoken. In conclusion, Błoński formulates a clear reference between social norms and nature, opposing them to homosexual desire. He describes Helena as

> representing a risky and violent love, yes, but also dedicated and, above all, conforming to the order of things, aiming towards marriage and fertility. So when the king gets Bertram under control, he also unknowingly takes control over the contaminated nature which

22 Ibid.

> turned away from its proper destiny, marriage and continuation of a noble family.[23]

Błoński regards Shakespeare as a conservative preserving the natural order of the world, and he himself also refers unquestioningly to natural laws. However, it seems that his interpretation was not reflected in other reviews. They reflect a state of confusion and incertitude. In the reviewers' reception, the tension between homosexuality and oppression of social norms, sexual desire and physical violence, obviously didn't play into the clear pattern offered by Błoński. The viewers' reactions also demonstrated the same confusion, for example the laughter noted by Fik during the scene of brutal humiliation of Parolles.

Only one record of the production's reception is exceptional. With unusual openness, Krzysztof Wolicki wrote in the first paragraph: 'I didn't feel well after this performance.'[24] And in the last paragraph, after careful evaluation of the performance, he explained: 'By writing that I didn't feel well after this performance I used a euphemism: I was sick and I wouldn't forget that any time soon.' Wolicki was the only critic who noted that the 'homosexual issue' held key importance for the production. He wrote of Lafew that perhaps he was 'an embarrassed homosexual irritated by his caricature in Parolles'. Words such as 'homosexual' and 'a homosexual' are used where they should be used, without sending mixed messages or winking at the reader, as in the reviews by Fik or Błoński, and so difficult to accept today. Wolicki leads his interpretation to a conclusion entirely contradicting Błoński's suggestions: 'Homosexual drive is equalled with the "normal" one, as just a drive, something simply related to the body, human naturalness.' The word 'normal' is put in quotation marks. He asks a clear question and gives a clear answer: 'What is a man-to-man desire when it is confronted with social inequality, the "order of gold and bread": humiliation and sadism. Parolles and Lafew.' Like other reviewers, Wolicki is moved by the drastic nature of Swinarski's production, but he has no trouble reading its social meaning.

Wolicki's review has some sense of emancipatory awareness; it shares the ethical and political foundation of the gay rights movement forming in the West. It doesn't negotiate with the audience's attitudes and their horizon of moral evaluation of homosexuality. Thanks to his review, we can clearly see the difference in depicting homosexuals in Swinarski's productions between *A Taste of Honey* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. In that sense, it is an exceptional, radical voice. Importantly, Wolicki doesn't refer to 'the reasons of the heart', but rather to an ethical and social norm contesting any foundation for discriminating against homosexual people. This leads us towards the forgotten processes of modernizing Polish society in the first half of the 1970s. Last but not least, it undermines the love for emphasizing the determinism of social phenomena in cultural studies. According to this version of determinism, manifestations of discrimination are justified by social

23 Jan Błoński, 'Komedia wieloznaczna' ['Ambiguous Comedy'], programme (Kraków: Stary Theatre, 1971).

24 All quotes in this paragraph: Krzysztof Wolicki, 'Tacy jesteśmy' ['That's How We Are'], *Teatr*, 1971, no. 22.

conditions, and articulating their evaluation from today's point of view is considered an ahistorical approach.

I propose to recognize Wolicki's review as one of the most important and quite exceptional documents of emancipatory thinking in Polish culture. It seems that there was no equivalent for the discourse he used in the public discourse on homosexuality of that time in Poland, either in literary criticism or in guidebooks on sexology. The first article in Poland condemning the social stigmatization of homosexuals was published three years later and was considered groundbreaking.[25] Its author, Tadeusz Gorgol, attempted to present a synthetic overview of the situation of the homosexual milieu in Poland of that time, offered a short historical account and describing liberation movements in the West. He called for tolerance but remained cautious in doing so. He emphasized the unclear aetiology of homosexuality: 'In fact, we are not sure whether homosexuality is a mental illness or just another normal kind of human sex life.' In conclusion, he asserted that he didn't demand the full range of civil rights for homosexuals, only more tolerance and understanding for their situation. In this context, Wolicki's voice sounds subversive, even if we acknowledge the difference between remarks in a theatre review and an article entirely devoted to the situation of homosexuals in Poland of that time, which was subject to complex negotiations with public opinion, rightly regarded as having quite a hostile attitude towards the issue.

It can be argued, without any doubt, that Swinarski's two productions discussed here revolutionized public discourse on homosexuality. They not only revealed the restrictions imposed on this discourse, but also unmasked its violence and the extent of the harm it caused. As a result, these performances disrupted the discourse and, temporarily at least, transformed it.

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Translated by Monika Bokiniec

25 Tadeusz Gorgol, 'Homoseksualizm a opinia' ['Homosexuality and Opinion'], *Życie Literackie*, 1974, no. 17–18.

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ABSTRACT

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Homosexuals in Konrad Swinarski's Productions: A Language Problem?

It is difficult to say beyond any doubt whether the reception of two performances by Konrad Swinarski, *Smak miodu* [*A Taste of Honey*] of 1959 in Teatr Wybrzeże and *Wszystko dobre, co się dobrze kończy* [*All's Well That Ends Well*] of 1971 at the Stary Theatre - was something absolutely unique in the history of post-war Polish culture. There is no doubt, however, that is unusual. In these two perfromances homosexual characters appear. Homosexual men. This does not, however, indicate the uniqueness of these performances. It is rather the fact that the reviewers openly adressed the homosexual orientation of the stage characters.

Keywords: Konrad Swinarski' queer, homosexuality.